1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

spread and well known tribes of the Central Uplands extending from Kolhan in the district of Singhbhum and as far west as the Chitor Hills. Contact with them was from the earliest as shown by the name "Kolarian", still used by many in a generic sense for the languages and people of the Munda group. Dr. Griffiths' account of the Kols in a readable handy form is expected to remove much of this want. As a missionary of the Methodist Church, who spent many years in Jubbulpore, Dr. Griffiths had great opportunity of intimate acquaintance with the Kols of this part and his account, therefore, is based on deep personal knowledge. The Kols described by him, however, are greatly acculturated with Hindu ideas and beliefs and do not retain their original practices in the same form and extent as those living in the interior of Rewa. Nevertheless, Dr. Griffiths has succeeded in discovering traces of many interesting customs not hitherto described. Such for example is the practice of local or village exogamy (pp. 69-70) although clan-Kurhi (or Got from Sans Gotra) exogamy is no longer prevalent (p. 52). The author considers that totemism has lost its significance among the Kols (p. 54), but Russell and Hiralal mention (The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces, Vol. III, pp. 510-11) the names of several totemistic septs among the Mandia Kols, *e.g.*, the Bargaiyan Kols, the Kathotia, the Katharia, and the Kumhra, who show special reverence to the Banyan tree, the Tiger, the Mattress and the Gourd respectively. Other apparently totemistic septs are the Mudia or Mudrundia, the Bhuwar, Nathunia and the Karpatia. Some of them such as Kathautia and Kathariya, Kurha, Bhumiya, Mudia (Murha) find place in the list of 22 clans given by the author (pp. 32-33). The possibility of a totemistic basis of their social organization is strongly suspected, but may perhaps be investigated with greater chances of success among the wilder Kols of Kaimur Hills, and those living in the interior of the Rewa State. Another interesting feature noted by the author is the use of bangles, specially made from metals like copper and iron, as effective protection against evil spirits, and of beads as defensive ornaments against the evil eye in children (p. 180).

The book is illustrated with drawings and well chosen photographs taken by the author, but there are unfortunately several printing errors and certain inconsistencies in the writing of the names of works cited, *e.g.*, W. Crooke's work is cited as "The Tribes and Castes of the North Western Provinces and Oudh" on p. 4, but on p. 33, the same work is written as—"Tribes and Castes of *North-West* Provinces and Oudh." Similarly Dr. Verrier Elwin's "The Baiga" is written incorrectly as *The Baigas*.

These small blemishes, however, do not detract from the real

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Chapter III

SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE KOLS

564 [614] Within the Kol tribe there are numerous subdivisions which are generally called *kurhis*, and occasionally *gotras*, though there is no trace of any exogamous clans. On the whole these groups are endogamous although hypergamy is sometimes practised, especially when no suitable mate from the same *kurhi* is available. There are certain restrictions in connection with food, and members of one *kurhi* will usually not take food with those of another

When questioned about *kurhis* and their number the answer has invariably been, seven; but when asked to list the seven there has been a great variety of answers and no two sets have ever agreed.[1] There seems to be considerable confusion in the minds of the Kols themselves and there is apparently no standard list.

124 564 The Main Divisions or Kurhis. Investigations as to the number, kinds and nature of the *kurhis* were carried out in a number of centres. In general the procedure was to get a group of Kols together and during the talks ask them about the *kurhis* and their names. The findings have been tabulated in the order of frequency. Twenty-one groups were consulted and the number following the name is the number of times a particular group was given. It will be noted that only the Rautiya *kurhi* occurs in all cases.

Rautiya	.. ..	21	Kulmangan	.. ..	5
Thakuriya	.. ..	18	Swasaha	.. ..	4
Rautel	.. ..	11	Bhumiya	.. ..	4
Kurha	.. ..	11	Murha	.. ..	3
Binj	.. ..	9	Gunj	.. ..	2
Garhvariya	.. ..	8	Kabiriya	.. ..	2
Khangar	.. ..	8	Narchhila	.. ..	2
Kathautiya	.. ..	7	Bhariya	.. ..	1
Mawasi	.. ..	6	Borowar	.. ..	1
Kathariya	.. ..	5	Maubhaiya	.. ..	1
Khairwar	.. ..	5	Pawai	.. ..	1

In the light of these investigations a considerable boiling down

1 This same seven-fold classification occurs among other groups which actually have many more divisions. See for example G. W. Briggs' *The Chamars*, pp. 31, 32.

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

same as Borowar on our list; Bin and Binj are probably the same, and Harwariya may have become Garhvariya; the ploughman becoming the fortress-dweller.

Russell and Hiralal[1] state that they found the subcastes noted below, but their results appear to be based on materials gathered from the eastern edge of the Central Provinces. It will be noted that there are points of agreement and disagreement between their list and ours: Rautia, Rautele, Thakuriya, Kagwaria, Desaha, Bharia, Savar and Khairwar. They also include as "totemistic septs" the following: Bargaiyan, Kathotia, Katharia, Kumhra and Bhuwar.

1. *Rautiya.* This designation is believed to be derived from the word Rawat meaning "a prince," and as such may be traced to some ancient landholding or warrior group among the Kols in centuries past. This group claims to be the highest of the Kol *kurkis* and such assertions were usually not disputed by either Thakuriyas or others in joint group discussions; although on one or two occasions it was controverted as recorded under the Thakuriya (*vide p.* 41). Almost without exception the Rautiyas make use of the Brahmin priest at the time of wedding, and of the Hindu *nai* or barber, and the *dhobi* or washerman in certain ceremonies connected with birth and death. Not to do this would be to sin against social conventions; yet in one or two cases we were told that if a Rautiya is too poor to employ a Brahmin he might make other arrangements. This probably means that far back in their history they attended to such matters themselves, but have now become Hinduized and feel unable to act for themselves. Rautiyas made the claim that they move freely among Hindus and are recognized by them in a manner that other Kol *kurkis* are not. While the group is theoretically endogamous, hypergamy is occasionally practised with the Thakuriyas. This is probably a relic from the time when intermarriage was common, but the process of Hinduization has now stabilized the *kurkis*. They admit that if necessary Thakuriya girls may be married to Rautiya boys, but deny that they ever give their girls in marriages to Thakuriyas. If a *swasaha* Rautiya—those whom perform marriage without the help of a Brahmin—has an eligible son they would give their daughter to him in marriage only if it is agreed that the Brahmin priest and the *nai*, will officiate in the regular way.

Rautiyas have a very definite taboo in the case of the horse. Horse manure is absolutely forbidden to be touched. There are several curious stories that came to our attention. One of them is that in the dim ages past Bhagawan gave the Kols the gift of a horse. In a few

1 Russell and Hiralal, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. III, Article Kol.

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

564 sub-groups are recognised within the Rautiya *kurhi*. These are often listed as entirely separate from Rautiyas, but when those conversant with such matters were pressed, it was found that these are really sub-groups of the Rautiya. The sub-groups are:

1a. *Rautel*. This group appears in eleven of the twenty-one lists as a genuine Kol *kurhi*. Further study has revealed that this name is used rather loosely and that there is really very little difference between the Rautels and the Rautiyas. In Maihar State groups calling themselves Rautel claimed that they practise hypergamy with Rautiyas and Thakuriyas; but this occurs only if suitable Rautel girls are not available for marriage. The groups in Maihar State claimed that they are the highest class of Kols, as a Brahmin priest always officiates in their wedding ceremonies, while the Rautiyas do not always observe this essential. It came out in the same discussions that Rautels eat off an earthen dish known as the *kurha*, and that they are thus probably identical with the sub-group of Rautiyas known as Kurhas. A Kathautiya Kol later confirmed this interpretation. This same informant said that his group used to practise hypergamy with Kurhas, but that now there are no restrictions, and in most places either can take or give their girls in marriage without hindrance. This opinion, however, was found to be inconsistent with enquiries in other centres.

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1b. *Kurha*. The Kurha is definitely a Rautiya of a particular kind, and might be considered a "totemistic sept". This group is expected to do all its eating off black earthenware vessels known as *kurhas*. These are not made by Kols themselves, but are bought from members of the potter caste, the Kumhars. The following stories were noted in regard to their origin.

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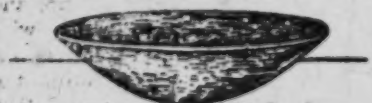

THE EARTHENWARE KŪṛHĀ
This is the dish from which the Rāutels should eat.

Fig. 17

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564 T13 Once upon a time there were two brothers who were orphaned of their father and brought up by their mother. After a time the old mother died and the two sons were forced to go out into the world and earn their own living. Following quite a long period of separation they happened to meet, and each enquired after the work and welfare of the other. The younger related how he was working for a certain master and how this master had fed him from a *kurha* made by a Kumhar. Then after becoming independent of his master he told how he had continued to use that type of dish. The elder brother was much annoyed at this and told his younger brother that they could no longer associate nor eat together because of this practice.

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

of this list is possible. When the list as a whole was presented to a large and representative Kol group it was asserted that certain of the names on this list were not true Kols; Khangar, Murha, Kabiriya, Khairwar and Narchhila were mentioned, but they did not know what to say about Binj and Gunj, and professed to have never heard about them. It was claimed that Rautel, Kurha, Kathautiya, Kathariya and Kulmangan were all forms of the Rautiya *kurhi*; they had heard of most of them, but had never actually seen all of them. Narchhila was said to be a group of Chamars. This confusion is no doubt due to the fact that other groups have been absorbed into the Kol community and have perpetuated names which are still current in spite of the mixture.

Of the twenty-two names collected from the Kols, Russell and Hiralal have only seven of their thirteen in common with ours. It is not unlikely that some of the names mentioned above are not actual Kols and in the following pages comments on each of the so-called *kurhis* will indicate certain conclusions. Rautiya Kols usually consider themselves the highest of the *kurhis*, although it was frequently noted that individuals from other groups also made the same claim.

William Crooke gives the following list of "endogamous septs", a list based on investigations in southern United Provinces and representing conditions about 1890, over fifty years ago.

1. Rautiya or Rautela
   Dahait or villagers
   Mahtiyan or leader (These are subdivisions)
2. Thakuriya .. "a lord"
3. Banaj ..
4. Pahariya .. "mountaineer"
5. Barwar .. "descendant from the fig (bar) tree"
6. Bin .. (or Binds?)
7. Harwariya .. "ploughman"
8. Rajwariya .. (from Bengal Rajwars?)
9. Hanriyanwa .. "people of the cooking pot"[1]

An examination of this list and its comparison with the one which we obtained shows that there are some common divisions, while some of the others may also be identical. There is exact agreement in the case of the Rautiya and Thakuriya *kurhis*, though the subdivisions of the Rautiyas do not bear much resemblance. Barwar is probably the

1. Crooke, W., *Tribes and Castes of the North West Provinces and Oudh*, Vol. III, Article Kol.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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give your opinion whether you are agreeable to social intercourse with the Kumhars.

This letter should be circulated in the following villages :

1. Kharara Ghat : the whole *panch*, Sahmat, Dhannu, Sunnu.
2. Bargaon : the whole *panch*.
3. Matawar Do.
4. Bharda Do.
5. Panagar Do.
6. Usmer Mohniya.
7. Jatma.

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This letter, without naming the offenders, is a complaint that somewhere in this particular Kol community social intercourse with the potter caste has been allowed without penalty. The Kumhars are among the lowest untouchables and no Kol should eat or drink with them. The *panch* of that particular village was so lax that the matter even went as far as a Kol girl becoming pregnant, due, presumably, to this association. They did not watch over the welfare of the group and began to check it only after it had gone as far as that. To the minds of the complainants the association with the Kumhars should never have been permitted and the rhetorical question is asked, if Kols should not have full intercourse with them, implying that to do so would be to degrade the Kols to the level of the Kumhars. This, of course, would be absurd, but is just what the other *panch* is allowing and so it should be checked. The letter attempts to put a stop to this and gives an example of the way such matters are sometimes handled.

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TOTEMISTIC ELEMENTS IN THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION. The phenomenon of totemism is widespread among the Munda tribes of India, and in many cases it still forms a fundamental feature of the social organization particularly in connection with marriage, kinship, and sexual relations. In certain cases, as with the Oraons,[1] there is a definitely intermediate stage, and endogamy is becoming the rule, but the clans among the more primitive tribes are still exogamous. Among some of the latter type, the Korwas and Birhors[2], for example, the totemistic organization is still quite intact ; in contrast, the Hill Bhuiyas of Orissa and the Juangs of Keonjhar, both Munda tribes, have at the present day no totemistic organization.[3] Although

1 Roy, S. C., *The Oraons of Chota Nagpur*, p. 224 ff.
2 Roy, S. C., *The Birhors*, Chapter IV.
3 Roy, S. C., *The Kharias*, pp. 145, 148.

li Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

in the case of the Hill Kharias the clan organization is based on totemistic principles, there is still no exogamy connected with it.[1] Roy remarks about another section of the Hill Kharias: "There is strong evidence to indicate that this section of the tribe has probably lost its clan organization as they have lost their aboriginal language, unless it may be that they never evolved any such organization."[2] Other Kharias, notably the Hill Kharias of Singhbhum and Manbhum districts have recorded of them that "the division into exogamous clans is recognized for the purpose of marriage."[3]

An examination of the clan organization of the Mundas, which might quite readily be worked out from existing materials, would be an interesting study. From our study of the Kols of Central India it is clear that they, like some of the Munda tribes noted above, have at the present day no totemistic clan organization as the basis of their social organization; exogamy is practically unknown, marriage being regulated within the group and even sub-groups on the basis of genealogical relationships. Fifty years ago Crooke wrote of the Kols of the Southern United Provinces that they have "shed off the elaborate system of totemistic septs which are found among the Mundas of Bengal."[4] On being asked questions dealing with a totem or an emblem of a clan the Kols said that they have clans which they term *gots*. Asked further how these differed from *kurhis* the answer given was that *gots* and *kurhis* are essentially the same. They said that on a tribal basis exogamy is unknown amongst them, and that marriage is always among the same *gots* or *kurhis*. There seems therefore to be no difference at the present time in marriage regulations between members of septs within the clan.

Some of the Kol *kurhis* which have no totems or clan emblems may be called *gots* in the same sense as are the three *kurhis*: Kurhas, Kathautiyas and Kathariyas, which apparently have as clan emblems the earthen vessel, the wooden bowl and the mattress, respectively.[5] No rites are observed in connection with these totems, either for their multiplication or for their preservation. As far as could be ascertained there are now no taboos in connection with them. In the cases of those who strictly use one or the other of these dishes the taking of food in the wrong kind of dish is taboo, that is, the Kurha should eat off earthen vessels; yet there are Kurhas who do not observe

1 *Ibid.*, pp. 122, 134, 138 etc.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 122.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 138.
4 Crooke, W., *Tribes and Castes of the Northwest Provinces and Oudh*, Vol. III, Art. Kol.
5 See pages 38, 37, 44.

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca.1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

this in a strict way, and when certain situations arise they may eat from a brass dish without offence. The same applies in the case of the Kathautiyas.

Russell and Hiralal[1] are supposed to have found traces of totemism among the Kols, but as previously noted it is clear that they have made a mistake in the case of the Kathariyas. They list certain "totemistic septs" in Mandla. They note that the Bargaiyan sept is really named after the village of Bargaon, that the sept connects its name with the *bar* or banyan tree (*Ficus indica*) and is said to revere it. This tree, however, is generally revered by Kols. Some of the sept's uses and taboos of the tree are mentioned in their article. The second sept, the Kathautia has the explanation that we have given, except it is reported that the sept reveres the tiger and keeps Bagheshwar Deo,[2] the tiger god, on a little platform on the veranda. We found no trace of this among the Kathautiyas interviewed. The third is the Kathariya sept, of which we have already spoken and where we believe the authors have gone astray. Fourthly, "The name of the Mudia or Mudrundia sept is said to mean shaven head, but they apparently revere the white *kumhra* or gourd, perhaps because it has some relation to the shaven head. They give the white gourd to a woman on the third day after she has borne a child, and her family do not eat this vegetable for three years."[3] Fifthly, the Kumraya sept is said to revere the brown *kumhra*. Again, the Bhuwar sept is named after *bhu* or *bhumi* and its members must never sleep on cots, always on the ground. We found no trace of this belief. "Other septs are Nathunia, a nose ring; Karpatia, a kind of grass; and Binjhwar, from a tribe of that name."[4] Russell and Hiralal do not state whether there are exogamic tendencies in connection with these septs or not. Totemism however, is a very complex phenomenon and differs widely even among the Mundas. There is apparently no single criterion: "Exogamy may or may not be coupled with the other features, totemistic taboos may be dissociated from a totemistic name for the group practising them; descent from the totem may or may not be postulated; and so forth."[5] Lowie goes on to discuss Goldenweiser's and Fraser's theories of totemism and finds them inadequate to explain the totemistic phenomena. "Only confusion can result from envisaging what is disparate under a single head."[6] The

1 Russell and Hiralal, *Op. Cit.*, Vol, III, p. 510, 511.
2 See index : Tiger.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 510.
4 *Ibid.*, p. 511.
5 Lowie, R. H., *Primitive Society*, p. 140.
6 *Ibid.*, p. 145.

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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Rautiya Kols have a strong taboo in relation to the horse, but repeated enquiries have failed to establish any totemistic connection, although it may exist. In view of these facts and in the light of these investigations it seems that totemism as such is apparently a negligible factor in the lives of the Kols of Central India. There are, it may be, certain traces of it kept alive by tradition, but its real significance has been lost. The unit of social organization turns out to be the family within the endogamous *kurhi*.

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582 for this village exogamy is that originally members of one and the same clan (*gotra* or *gotar*) lived together, as the traditions of the Dudh and Dhelki sections definitely testify, and as is still the case in many Hill Kharia settlements."[1] The Kols themselves offer other explanations for this type of exogamy, but the idea of the oneness of the village lies at the back of certain of their reasons. Some said that the children of a village living, as they do, like brothers and sisters makes any thought of such unions repugnant. A similar reason was implied in the response that the boys and girls know each other too well and such a condition would not be conducive to the future marriage relationships. [606 It was also asserted that the presence of parents-in-law was not desirable 593] in the same village, for if the bride was ever beaten by her husband (and it was thought that this was inevitable) her parents might be very angry and a serious quarrel with much trouble between the families was sure to result. Therefore it was considered best to get a girl from another village, and the further the village, the better the chances of avoiding such parent-in-law conflicts. Near Katni they claimed that they often got their girls from the Jubbulpore section, and that they [167] sometimes had gone as far as Assam, where Kols have gone to work in the tea gardens.

582 As remarked earlier, no trace of a clan exogamy could be found 776 among the Kols of to-day, nor an exogamy based on god-septs as 171 among the Gonds,[2] where marriage is not possible between clans 614 with the same number of gods. A family having three gods may marry into another with the same gods or into another with other and a different number of gods.

582 MARRIAGE LIMITATIONS. There is, however, a clear line limiting the choice of either the bride or the bridegroom. It is based on kinship, for as long as relationship is remembered no marriage should take place. No trace was found of the cross-cousin marriage nor of the ancient Munda custom of marrying a grandfather to a granddaughter.[3] No [835] distinctions are made between cousins. The Kols also possess that which Lowie calls the "incest horror."[4] Children of siblings are 587 brothers and sisters and between them marriage is considered impossible. 582 The levirate, in which the younger brother may be expected to take the wife of a deceased elder brother, is acknowledged. There is, however, no necessity for his doing this, and public opinion does not enforce it; yet in a real sense he is responsible for her welfare and

1 Roy, S. C., *The Kharias*, p. 234.
2 Grigson, W. V., *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*, pp. 194, 196, 228.
3 Ghurye, G. S., *Caste and Race in India*, p. 117.
4 Lowie, R. H., *Primitive Society*, pp. 15, 16.